

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2701

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AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 1480

ROME FOR RCAA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BEXP EAIR BENC PINT GR

SUBJ: FUTURE ATHENS AIRPORT - COMMOTION AT SPATA

REF A. ATHENS 1309 (NOTAL) B. ATHENS 9868 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: ANTI-AIRPORT DEMONSTRATIONS AT SPATA LAST WEEK  
UNDERScore LOCAL RESENTMENT AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY  
OF THE NEW ATHENS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT LOCATING THERE.  
AT THE SAME TIME, TRANSPORT MINISTER VOYATZIA ANNOUNCED  
THAT A FRANCO-GERMAN CONSORTIUM HAS BEEN SELECTED DIRECTLY--  
WITHOUT INERNATIONAL BIDDING--TO MAKE A NEW STUDY  
LEADING TO SITE SELECTION FOR THE AIRPORT. ALTHOUGH  
SPATA CURRENTLY SEEMS THE MOST LIKELY LOCATION BECAUSE  
OF ITS PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS, THE ISSUE REMAINS HIGHLY  
POLITICAL AND SENSITIVE, AND OTHER EVENTUAL ALTERNATIVE  
LOCATIONS CANNOT BE RULED OUT. IN ANY EVENT ACTUAL  
AIRPORT CONSTRUCTION STILL SEEMS A LONG WAY OFF.  
END SUMMARY.

1. ABOUT ONE THOUSAND INHABITANTS OF THE SPATA AREA  
(A RELATIVELY FLAT AGRICULTURAL REGION NORTHEAST OF  
ATHENS) CLASHED VIOLENTLY WITH ABOUT 500 GENDARMES  
ON FEBRUARY 12. THE LATTER TRIED TO DEMOLISH OBSERVATION  
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POSTS BUILT BY THE VILLAGERS TO GUARD AGAINST ANY SUDDEN

ACTION THE GOG MIGHT TAKE TO OCCUPY THE SITE, WHICH IS BEING STUDIED AS A POSSIBLE LOCATION FOR THE NEW ATHENS AIRPORT. MANY OF THE VILLAGERS RODE TRACTORS, AND ATTACKED THE GENDARMES WITH STONES, CLUBS, AND IRON BARS. TEAR GAS WAS USED AS VILLAGERS OVERTURNED POLICE CARS. A COLONEL OF THE GENDARMARIE, THREE SERGEANTS, AND TWENTY-THREE ENLISTED MEN WERE REPORTED INJURED. ALTHOUGH VILLAGERS WERE UNDOUBTEDLY ALSO INJURED, NO SUCH INJURIES WERE REPORTED, POSSIBLY FOR FEAR OF ARREST FOR INVOLVEMENT IN DEMONSTRATION.

2. MINISTER OF TRANSPORT VOYATZIS ANNOUNCED ON FEBRUARY 13 THAT THE CONSORTIUM AEROPORT DE PARIS/FLUGHAFEN FRANKFURT-MAIN HAD BEEN CHOSEN TO SELECT A SUITABLE SITE FOR THE NEW INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. THIS IS THE SAME CONSORTIUM THAT WAS SELECTED IN NOVEMBER, 1975 TO SURVEY THE PAHI, MEGARA SITE AND HAD FOUND IT UNSUITABLE. LAST NOVEMBER, THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT HAD SOLICITED OFFERS TO STUDY THE PAHI SITE FROM SIX FIRMS OR CONSORTIA; THE FOUR THAT HAD BEEN SHORTLISTED IN 1973 FOR DOING THE MASTERPLAN FOR THE SPATA AIRPORT (WHICH INCLUDED THE FRANCO-GERMAN CONSORTIUM, TIPPETTS-ABBET-MCCARTHY-STRATTON (TAMS) (US), AND TWO OTHER US/US CONSRTIA) PLUS DOXIADES ASSOCIATES (GREEK) AND AIRWAYS ENGINEERING (US). NOW, HOWEVER, THE OTHER FIRMS WERE NOT SOLICITED FOR BIDS.

3. THE CHOICE OF A SITE FOR THE NEW AIRPORT WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE A VERY DIFFICULT ONE, BECAUSE THE SITES PHYSICALLY MOST SUITABLE ARE ALSO LIKELY TO RAISE THE GREATEST POLITICAL PROBLEMS. THIS FACTOR MAY HAVE PLAYED SOME ROLE IN THE GOG'S DECISION TO ENGAGE A FOREIGN CONSULTING FIRM--THAT IS, TO HELP DEFLECT SOME OF THE CRITICISM WHICH WILL INEVITABLY BE MADE OF ANY SITE CHOSEN. US CONSULTING FIRMS MAY BELIEVE THAT THE SITE SELECTION STUDY CONFERES AN ADVANTAGE FOR EVENTUALLY OBTAINING THE MORE LUCRATIVE AIRPORT MASTERPLAN STUDY. IT IS AT LEAST WOTH NOTING, HOWEVER, THAT US INVOLVEMENT IN THE SENSITIVE AIRPORT SELECTION PROCESS COULD HAVE ADDED TO EXISTING CONFIDENTIAL

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SOURCES OF ANTI-AMERICANISM IN GREECE. IN ANY EVENT, ONCE THE SITE IS SELECTED, WE BELIEVE US FIRMS CAN COMPETE EFFECTIVELY FOR THE MASTERPLAN AND EMBASSY WILL PRESS FOR COMPETITIVE INTERNATIONAL BIDDING ON THIS CONTRACT.

4. THE FRENCH-GERMAN CONSORTIUM HAS UNTIL MAY TO COME UP WITH ITS SELECTION. SUCH A SITE SURVEY HAD ACTUALLY

BEEN DONE OVER THREE YEARS AGO BY THE US FIRM AIRWAYS ENGINEERING, WHICH CHOSE SPATA. OTHER POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS ARE: (A) STAYING AT THE PRESENT SITE, ELIMINATING MILITARY AND GENERAL AVIATION, AND BUILDING A PARALLEL RUNWAY INTO THE SEA. ALTHOUGH EXPERTS CLAIM THAT THIS SOLUTION WOULD ELIMINATE NEARLY ALL OF THE NOISE PROBLEM, AND WOULD EXTEND THE UTILITY OF THE PRESENT AIRPORT NEARLY TO THE END OF THIS CENTRY, HOTELS AND RESIDENTS OF THE NEARBY SEASIDE RESORT OF GLYFADA REMAIN ADAMANTLY OPPOSED. (B) DEVELOPING MAKRONISSOS ISLAND, A LONG, BARREN ISLAND OFF THE SOUTHEAST TIP OF ATTIKA, INTO AN AIRPORT BY LEVELING THE TOP OF THE ISLAND AND BUILDING A TWO KILOMETER CAUSEWAY TO THE MAINLAND WITH THE RESULTING FILL. (THIS IS DOXIADES' PROPOSAL.) THIS IS A VERY EXPENSIVE SOLUTION, AND WOULD ALSO REQUIRE A NEW CONNECTING HIGHWAY IF THE 45 KILOMETER RIDE TO DOWNTOWN ATHENS IS TO REMAIN WITHIN REASONABLE LIMITS OF TIME. (C) USING THE VARI AREA, WHICH NOW CONSISTS OF LOW BARREN HILLS. CLOSER TO ATHENS THAN MAKRONISSOS, AND LARGELY UNINHABITED, IT WOULD NEVERTHELESS REQUIRE A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF EARTHMOVING AND COULD SPOIL A SECTION OF THE COAST SOUTH OF GLYFADA. (D) OTHER POSSIBILITIES, WHICH SEEM EVERN LESS LIKELY AT THE CURRENT JUNCTURE, INCLUDE CORINTH, TANAGRA, AND THE ISLAND OF SALAMIS. KUBISCH

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